

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3713

C O N F I E E N T I A L BOGOTA 2124

FOR ARA DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY LUERS

EO: 11652: GDS

TAGS: ALAB CO

SUBJ: AIFLD PRIVATELY FUNDED ACTIVIST PROGRAM

1. AS YOU NO DOUBT KNOW, AIFLD IS ORGANIZING AN ACTIVIST PROGRAM FOR LATIN AMERICAN LABOR ORGANIZATIONS TO BE FUNDED PRIVATELY BY THE AFL-CIO. IT CONSISTS OF A SIX-WEEK ORGANIZER'S COURSE AT FRONT ROYAL FOR PARTICIPANTS SELECTED BY VARIOUS TRADE CONFEDERATIONS AND APPROVED BY AIFLD. FOLLOWING THAT, AIFLD WILL SUBSIDIZE THE ORGANIZERS' ACTIVITIES IN THEIR HOME COUNTRY THROUGH "NINE-MONTH INTERNSHIPS", THE FUNDING COMING FROM THE PRIVATE FUNDS AUTHORIZED BY THE AFL-CIO. THE LARGEST SUCH PROGRAM WILL, I AM INFORMED, BE IN COLOMBIA, WHERE SIX PARTICIPANTS WILL BE FUNDED WHOSE OBJECTIVES WILL BE TO ORGANIZE NEW UNIONS, AND LVFTE OR REAFFILIATE UNIONS TO BHE UTC AND CTC AND TO "DEFEND THE DEMOCRATIC INTEGRITY OF UNIONS ALREADY AFFILIATED TO THE UTC AND CTC."

2. I HAVE BEEN ASKED--ORALLY BY AIFLD REPRESENTATIVE SAM HADDAD ON FEBRUARY 10 AND BY LETTER DATED JANUARY 29 FROM ANDY MCLELLAN--TO PERMIT AIFLD/COLOMBIA AND AIFLD CPD MICHAEL VERDU TO ACT AS THE CONDUIT FOR THE FUNDS AND TO MONITOR THE ACTIVIST PROGRAM.

3. I SHOULD LIKE TO RECORD MY POSITION AS FOLLOWS: A) THE ACTIVITIES CONTEMPLATED INVOLVE PURELY INTERNAL MATTERS WHICH ARE INTIMATELY PART OF EACH COUNTRY'S INTERNAL POLITICAL/SOCIAL/ECONOMIC SITUATION; B) QAILE THIS KIND OF ASSISTANCE IS UNDOUBTEDLY HELPFUL AND WHILE I DO NOT OBJECT TO THE EXTENSION OF THIS KIND OF ASSISTANCE PRIVATELY BY THE AFL-CIO, I DO NOT THINK THAT THE USG SHOULD BE IDENTIFIED WITH OR ENGAGE IN THAT KIND OF DOMESTIC INCONFIDENTIAL

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VOLVEMENT; MY REASONS ARE OUTLINED IN MY LETTER OF DECEMBER 31, 1975 TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS; USG INVOLVEMENT IN--OR BELIEVED INVOLVEMENT IN--SUCH ACTIVITIES POLITICIZES THEX AND MAKES THE US POSITION AND THE PROGRAMS THEMSELVES POLITICALLY VULNER-

ABLE; C) EVEN THOUGH THE PR RN JD PROGRAM IS FUNDED PRIVATELY AND NOT BY THE USG, NO PRACTICAL SUCCESSFUL OR CONVINCING DISTINCTION CAN BE MADE IN THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT IF WE UTILIZE THE AIFLD CONDUIT. THE CREDITABILITY OF ANY EXPLANATION WOULD SIMPLY BE PUT INTO DOUBT--JUSTLY OR UNJUSTLY--BY THE CIRCUMSTANCES; D) THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES ARE: (1) THE AIFLD COUNTRY MISSION IS IDENTIFIED WITH THE USG BECAUSE ITS PROGRAMS ARE KNOWINGLY FINANCED IN LARGE PART BY USG FUNDS, AND IT IS KNOWN AS AND PRESENTED AS AN AID CONTRACTOR; (2) THE CPD HAS BEEN ACCREDITED BY THE EMBASSY TO THE FOREIGN OFFICE AS A CONTRACT AID EMPLOYEE; (3) HIS COLOMBIAN VISA INDICATES THAT HE IS "A MEMBER OF THE US ECONOMIC MISSION"; AND (4) HE IS ACCORDED BY THE HOST COUNTRY DUTY-FREE PRIVILEGES AND OFFICIAL LICENSE PLATES AS A MEMBER OF THIS DIPLOMATIC MISSION. THE ASSERTION THAT HE CAN ACT FOR SOME PURPOSES AS A CONTRACTOR FOR THE USG AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES AS A PRIVATE PERSON, WHILE THEORETICALLY CORRECT, CANNOT, IN MY JUDGMENT, BE PRACTICALLY PUT FORWARD SUCCESSFULLY. TO USE THIS CONDUIT THEREFORE EXPOSES THE USG TO POLITICAL VULNERABILITIES WHICH WE SHOULD AVOID. EVEN THOUGH THERE IS NO POLITICAL CONTROVERSY NOW EXTANT REGARDING US INTERVENTION IN DOMESTIC LABOR AFFAIRS, WE SHOULD NOT PUT OURSELVES IN A POSITION WHERE THAT CHARGE COULD APPEAR PLAUSIBLY TO BE MADE; IT IS ONLY PRUDENT TO DECREASE NOT INCREASE OUR VULNERABILITY BECAUSE WE CANNOT PREDICT WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES WILL OCCUR IN THE FUTURE.

4. I THEREFORE DO NOT CONCUR IN THE UTILIZATION OF THE AIFLD MISSION AND THE CPD AS CONDUIT FOR THESE FUNDS OR AS MONITORS OF THE OPERATION. I REPEAT, HOWEVER, THAT I DO NOT OBJECT TO THE PROGRAM. I ONLY ASK THAT THE AFL/CIO AND AIFLD COME UP WITH SOME OTHER PATTERN THAT WILL MAKE CRYSTAL CLEAR THAT THIS IS A PRIVATE NOT OFFICIAL ACTIVITY. I KNOW THAT THERE IS CONCERN THAT ANY OTHER ARRANGEMENT MIGHT SEEM LIKE SUBTERFUGE, BUT I DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THAT SHOULD BE THE CASE. WHY, FOR EXAMPLE, COULD NOT THE AFL/CIO SIMPLY DEAL DIRECTLY AND OPENLY WITH THE CONFEDERATIONS; THE DANGER OF SUBTERFUGE, IT SEEMS TO ME, ARISES PRECISELY WHEN AIFLD IS USED, BECAUSE THAT IS AN ENTITY THAT IS IDENTIFIED IRRETRIEVABLY WITH THE USG AND ITS DIRECTOR IS SOMEONE OFFICIALLY CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESENTED BY US AS A USG EMPLOYEE AND ACCEPTED BY THE HOST GOVERNMENT AS SUCH. I LEAVE IT TO THE AFL/CIO AND THE AIFLD HOW THEY MIGHT STRUCTURE THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM, BUT I AM SURE THAT THEY CAN FIND SOME WAY TO DO SO IN AN OPEN AND CLEAR MANNER.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: I WOULD APPRECIATE THE DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS AND ASSESSMENT OF THIS SITUATION. I WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE YOUR CONVEYING TO THE AIFLD MY NON-CONCURRENCE IN THE USE OF THE LOCAL AIFLD ORGANIZATION FOR THIS PURPOSE. I AM REPLYING SEPARATELY TO ANDY MCLELLAN'S LETTER IN THAT SENSE.  
VAKY

CONFIDENTIAL

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